

Approved For Release 2005/07/01 : CIA-RDP91-00901R000700090030-2

Nixon Statement on June, 1972, Conversations With Haldeman

Statement by the President:

I have today instructed my attorneys to make available to the House Judiciary Committee, and I am making public, the transcripts of three conversations with H. R. Haldeman on June 23, 1972. I have also turned over the tapes of these conversations to Judge Sirica, as part of the process of my compliance with the Supreme Court ruling.

On April 29, in announcing my decision to make public the original set of White House transcripts, I stated that "as far as what the President personally knew and did with regard to Watergate and the cover-up is concerned, these materials—together with those already made available—will tell it all."

Shortly after that, in May, I made a preliminary review of some of the 64 taped conversations subpoenaed by the special prosecutor.

Among the conversations I listened to at that time were two of those of June 23. Although I recognized that these presented potential problems, I did not inform my staff or my counsel of it, or those arguing my case, nor did I amend my submission to the Judiciary Committee in order to include and reflect it. At the time, I did not realize the extent of the implications which these conversations might now appear to have. As a result, those arguing my case, as well as those passing judgment on the case, did so with information that was incomplete and in some respects erroneous. This was a serious act of omission for which I take full responsibility and which I deeply regret.

Since the Supreme Court's decision 12 days ago, I have ordered my counsel to analyze the 64 tapes, and I have listened to a number of them myself. This process has made it clear that portions of the tapes of these June 23 conversations are at variance with certain of my previous statements. Therefore, I have ordered the transcripts made available immediately to the Judiciary Committee so that they can be re-

flected in the committee's report, and included in the record to be considered by the House and Senate.

In a formal written statement on May 22 of last year, I said that shortly after the Watergate break-in I became concerned about the possibility that the FBI investigation might lead to the exposure either of unrelated covert activities of the CIA, or of sensitive national security matters that the so-called "plumbers" unit at the White House had been working on, because of the CIA and plumbers connections of some of those involved. I said that I therefore gave instructions that the FBI should be alerted to coordinate with the CIA, and to ensure that the investigation not expose these sensitive national security matters.

That statement was based on my recollection at the time—some 11 months later—plus documentary materials and relevant public testimony of those involved.

The June 23 tapes clearly show, however, that at the time I gave those instructions I also discussed the political aspects of the situation, and that I was aware of the advantages this course of action would have with respect to limiting possible public exposure of involvement by persons connected with the reelection committee.

My review of the additional tapes has, so far, shown no other major inconsistencies with what I have previously submitted. While I have no way at this stage of being certain that there will not be others, I have no reason to believe that there will be. In any case, the tapes in their entirety are now in the process of being furnished to Judge Sirica. He has begun what may be a rather lengthy process of reviewing the tapes, passing on specific claims of executive privilege on portions of them, and forwarding to the special prosecutor those tapes or those portions that are relevant to the Watergate investigation.

It is highly unlikely that this re-

view will be completed in time for the House debate. It appears at this stage, however, that a House vote on impeachment is, as a practical matter, virtually a foregone conclusion, and that the issue will therefore go to trial in the Senate. In order to ensure that no other significant relevant materials are withheld, I shall voluntarily furnish to the Senate everything from these tapes that Judge Sirica rules should go to the special prosecutor.

I recognize that this additional material I am now furnishing may further damage my case, especially because attention will be drawn separately to it rather than to the evidence in its entirety. In considering its implications, therefore, I urge that two points be borne in mind.

The first of these points is to remember what actually happened as a result of the instructions I gave on June 23. Acting Director Gray of the FBI did coordinate with Director Helms and Deputy Director Walters of the CIA. The CIA did undertake an extensive check to see whether any of its covert activities would be compromised by a full FBI investigation of Watergate. Deputy Director Walters then reported back to Mr. Gray that they would not be compromised. On July 6, when I called Mr. Gray, and when he expressed concern about improper attempts to limit his investigation, as the record shows, I told him to press ahead vigorously with his investigation—which he did.

The second point I would urge is that the evidence be looked at in its entirety, and the events be looked at in perspective. Whatever mistakes I made in the handling of Watergate, the basic truth remains that when all the facts were brought to my attention, I insisted on a full investigation and prosecution of those guilty. I am firmly convinced that the record, in its entirety, does not justify the extreme step of impeachment and removal of a President. I trust that as the constitutional process goes forward, this perspective will prevail.

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President Accused of Withholding Tapes Show Approved Cover-up

The Plan: Use CIA to Block Probe

By Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein
Washington Post Staff Writers

President Nixon personally ordered a cover-up of the facts of Watergate within six days after the illegal entry into the Democrats' national headquarters on June 17, 1972, according to three new transcripts of Mr. Nixon's conversation released by the White House yesterday.

The transcripts, recounting conversations on June 23, 1972, between Mr. Nixon and H. R. Haldeman, then his White House chief of staff, completely undermine the President's previous insistence that he was uninvolved in the cover-up.

Instead, the transcripts show the President directed efforts to hide the involvement of his aides in the Watergate break-in through series of orders to conceal details about the break-in known to himself but not to the FBI.

Specifically, the transcripts show that by June 23, 1972, Mr. Nixon had been informed by Haldeman that presidential campaign funds could be

traced through Mexico and elsewhere to one of the Watergate burglars. In addition, Haldeman informed Mr. Nixon that he believed former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, then the President's re-election campaign manager, knew in advance of the break-in.

In response, the transcripts demonstrate, Mr. Nixon approved a plan to have the Central Intelligence Agency falsely claim that full FBI investigation into Watergate would expose covert operations of the agency.

Previously, the President has insisted that he approved such a plan only in the interests of "national security" and that political considerations played no role in his decision.

The transcripts demonstrate that exactly the opposite was the case.

Haldeman first proposed the cover-up scheme, according to the transcripts, at a morning meeting in which he told Mr. Nixon: "You know the Democratic break-in thing, we're back in the problem area because the FBI is not under control, because (acting FBI Director L. Patrick) Gray doesn't exactly know how to control it and they have—their investigation is now leading into some productive areas—... and it goes in some directions we don't want it to go."

Haldeman suggested having then CIA Deputy Director Vernon Walters tell Gray, "Stay to hell out of this, this is ah, business here we don't want you to go any further on it."

Then Haldeman told the President that a \$25,000 check from Minnesota businessman Kenneth H. Dahlberg and a presidential campaign contribution from Texas could be traced through Mexico to the Watergate burglars.

Haldeman, according to the transcripts, then asked the President about how to handle the FBI probe: "And you seem to think the thing to do is get them to stop?"

"Right, fine," the President replied. From that moment on, the transcripts make clear, the Watergate cover-up was in motion with the full knowledge, acquiescence and even direction of the President.

Moments later in that initial 95-minute conversation on the morning of June 23, the President specifically described what Haldeman should tell the CIA:

"When you get in—when you get in (unintelligible) people, say, 'Look the problem is that this will open the whole Bay of Pigs thing, and the President just feels that ah, without going into the details—don't; don't lie to them to the extent to say there is no involvement, but just say this is a comedy of errors, without getting into it, the President believes that it is going to open the whole Bay of Pigs thing up again.'"

"And, ah," the President continued, "because these people are plugging for (unintelligible) and that they should call the FBI in and (unintelligible) don't go any further into this case period?"

The transcripts also seem to indicate that, on June 23, the President somehow suspected or knew of the involvement of former White House aide G. Gordon Liddy

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